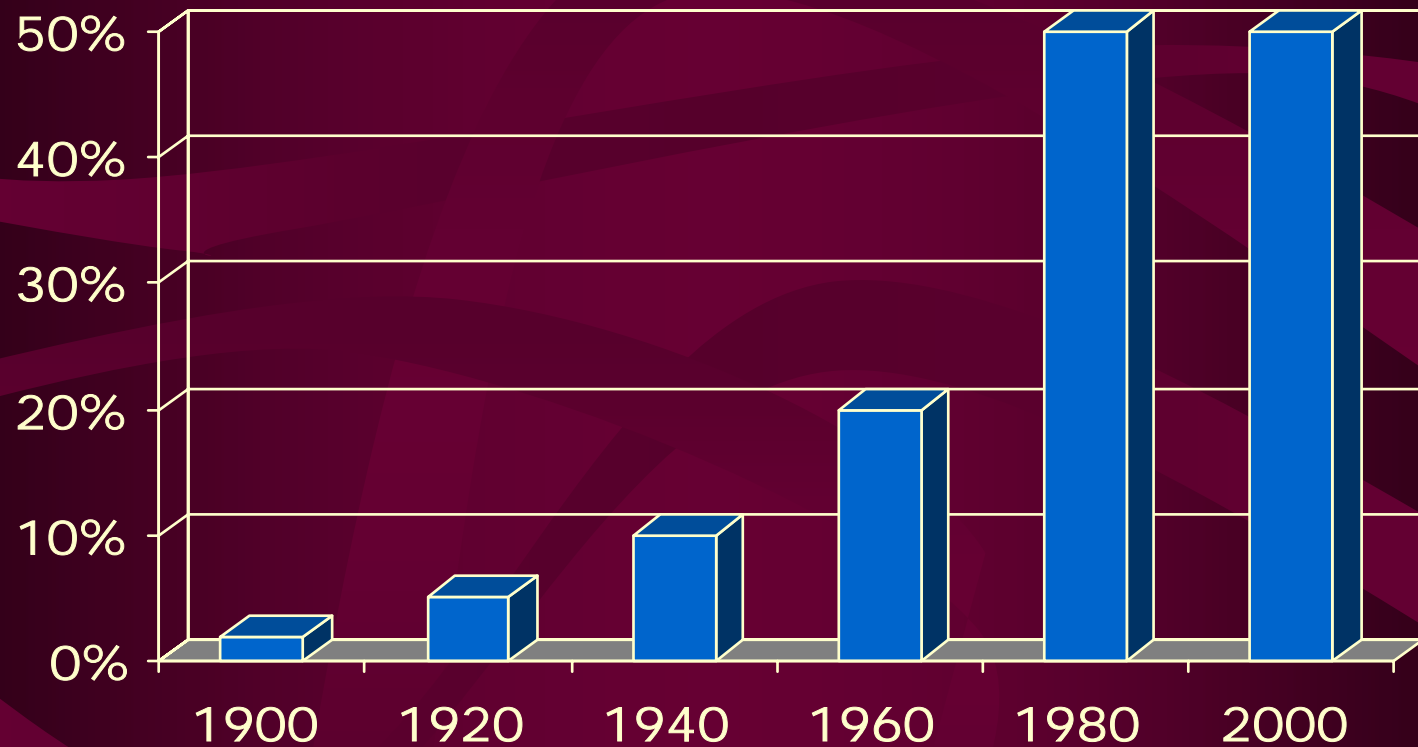


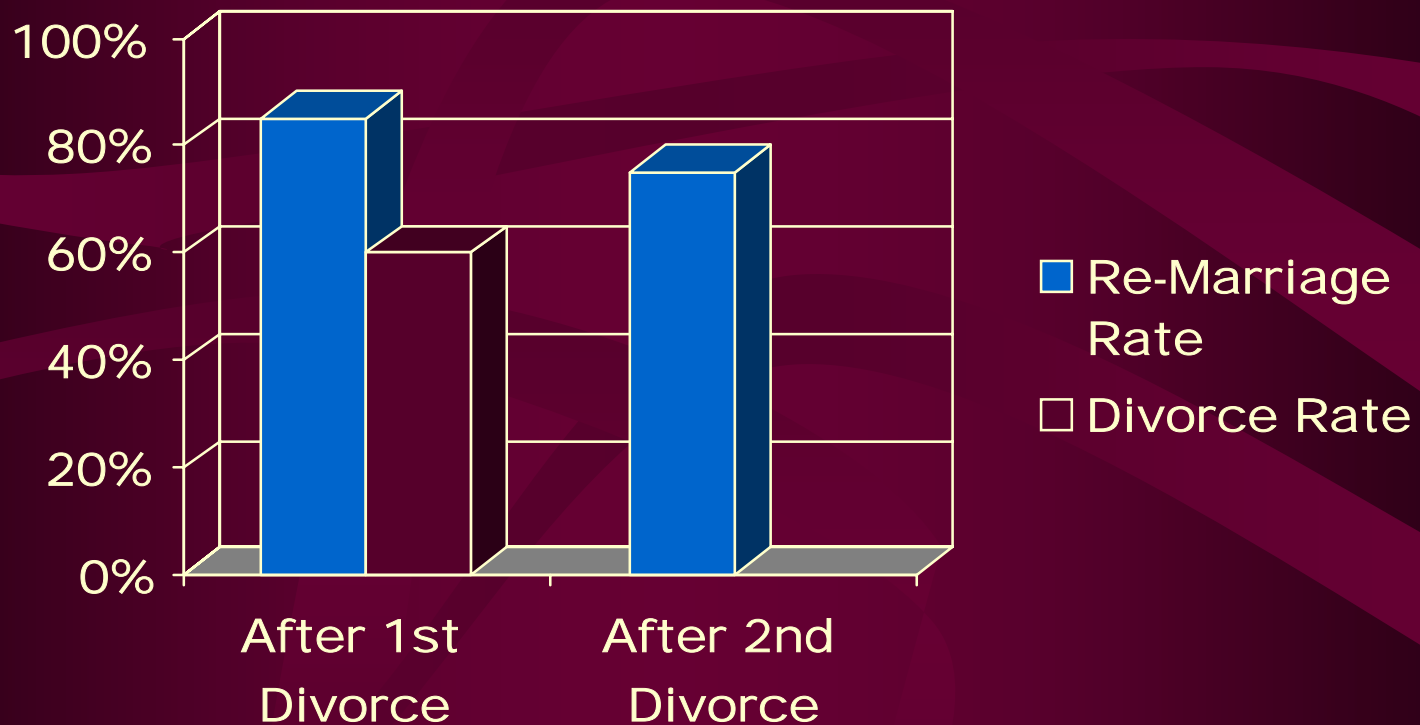
The Effects of Divorce on Children

Protecting Children
During and After
Divorce

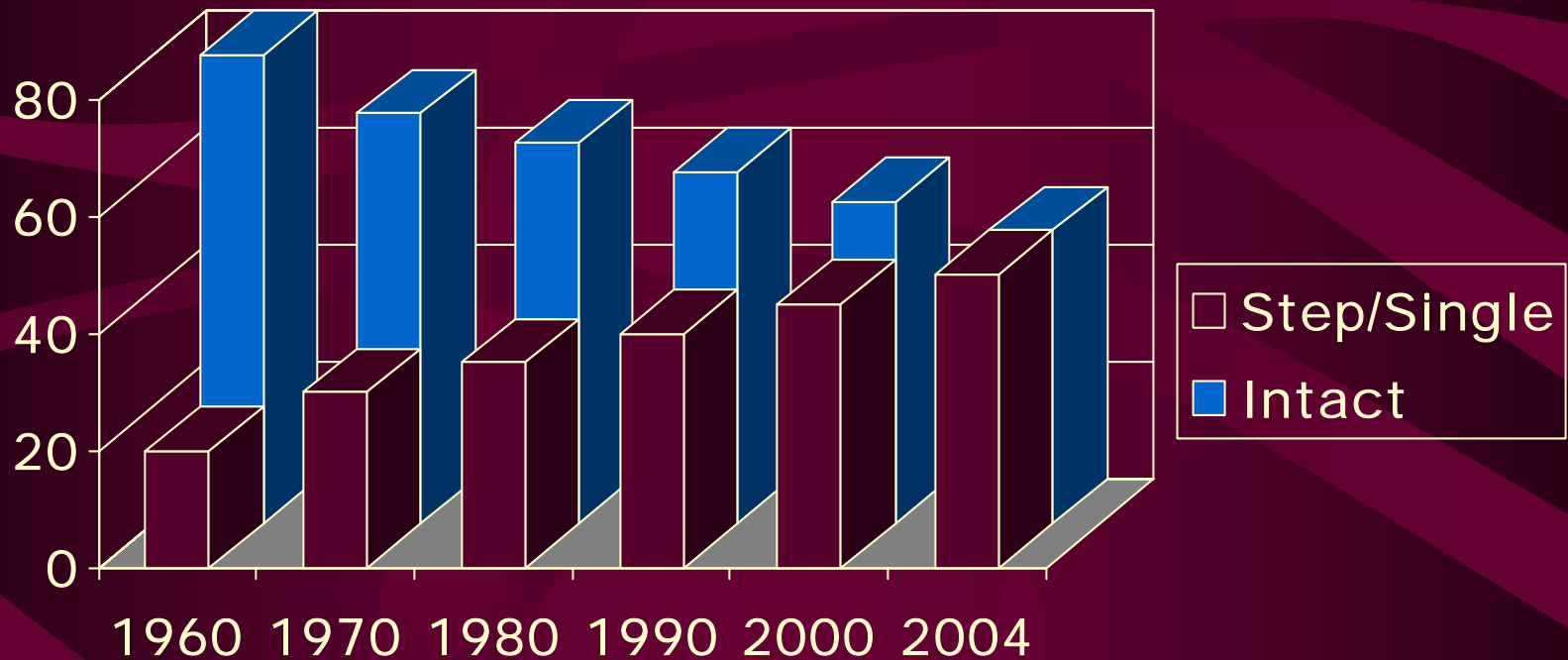
Divorce Trends This Century



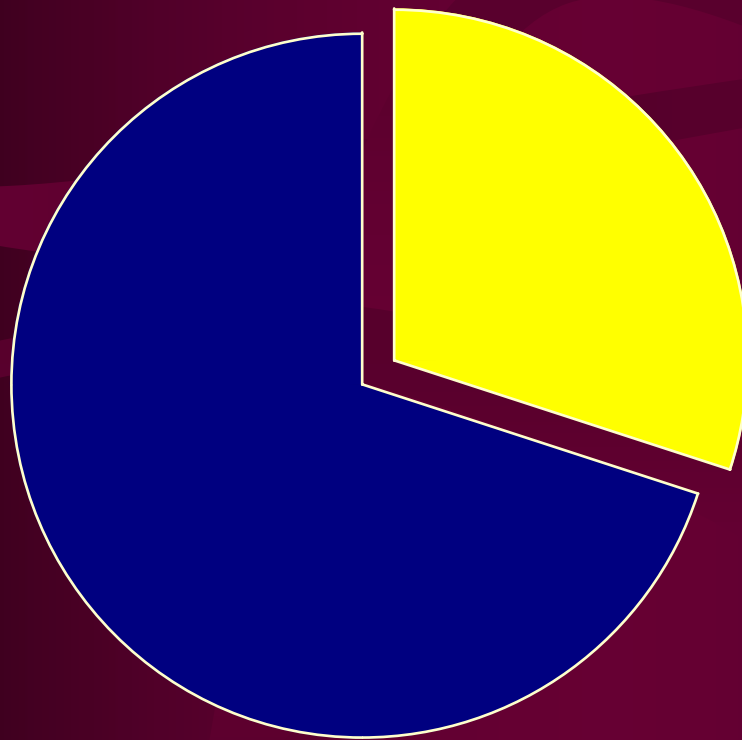
Rate of Re-Marriage



Children's Living Arrangements

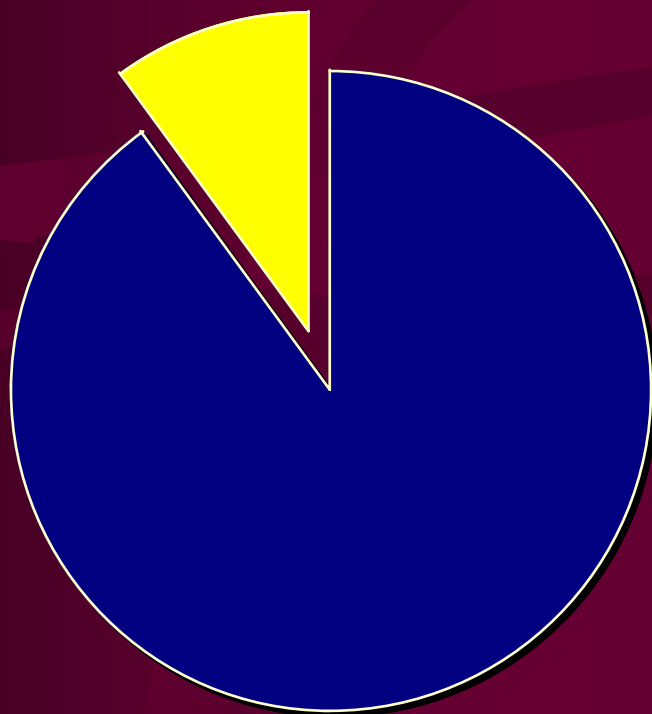


All Children Born This Year, by Age 18



- Always in Intact Home, 30%
- Some Time in Single Parent Home, 70%

Black, Inner-City Children, by Age 18



- Some Time in Single Parent Home, 90%
- Always in Intact Home, 10%

What Can You Do?

- How do you see your role in the community?
Narrow or broad, activist or not?
- Affecting the divorce rate:
 - Prevention by skills training. Local providers can get workshop training, couples can go to weekend retreats in the region. See www.smartmarriages.com
 - Enlist the help of clergy to identify couples at risk of divorcing and to provide couples skills training

What Can You Do? (Cont'd)

- Remarriage trends.
- How many of you are in second marriages?
- Role conflicts?
- Educate parents about risk factors: remarriage, step-parenting. How to do this?

Effects of Divorce on Children

- Immediate effects
 - A. Anger against one or both parents
 - B. Pervasive sadness, deep loss
 - C. Disruptions in concentration, academic functioning

Effects of Divorce on Children, Cont'd

D. Anxiety re care, residence

E. Children in high conflict
families may experience
relief

- These immediate effects tend to lessen
over the first year

Effects of Divorce on Children, Cont'd

- Long term effects
 - Rule of thirds (Wallerstein and Kelly) for 5-10 years:
 - 1/3 doing pretty well
 - 1/3 having some problems
 - 1/3 having serious problems

Types of Problems

A. Behavior and conduct

Boys: “externalizing”: aggression, hyperactivity, disruptive, delinquency, sub. Abuse

Girls: “internalizing” : anxiety, depression, withdrawal

B. Social relationships

Types of Problems, Cont'd

C. Poorer psychological
adjustment

D. Relationship with parents:
conflict, attention-seeking,
“parentified” child, peacemaker

E. Poorer school performance

Some Problems Carry Into Adulthood

- Lower psychological well-being
- Lower academic attainment
- Lower social class achieved
- Poorer relationships with parents
- More problems in own marriage
- Higher divorce rates (60%)

Age Effects: Infancy

- Controversy surrounding infant overnight visits with non residential parent: theory vs. Facts—no basis for blanket overnight restrictions
- Higher frequency contacts for younger children related to their sense of time

Age Effects: Infancy

- Initially restrictive access is followed by declining paternal involvement over time
- Psychosocial development harmed by lack of involvement of one parent
- Brain development requires stimulation from parents

Age Effects: Pre-school

- Fear, confusion
- Worry, strange fantasies
- Guilt over causing breakup
- Regressions
- Needs: consistent contact, quality parenting

Age Effects:

Early Elementary

- Grief; Yearning for lost parent
- Anger exaggeration to residential parent, suppression to nonresidential parent
- Reunion fantasies

Age Effects:

Early Elementary, Cont'd

- Assuming responsibility for parents' problems (often called "parentification")
- Loyalty tug-of-war between mom and dad, inability to speak up
- School problems

Age Effects: Middle School

- Hide or deny feelings
- Try to un-do the divorce
- Anger over parental double standards
- Psychosomatic & self-esteem problems

Age Effects:

Middle School (Cont'd)

- Peer problems
- Self-consciousness
- Risk factors higher when parental supervision declines: substance abuse, behavior problems, delinquency
- Testing limits with parental discipline
- Drop in communication with parents

Age Effects: Adolescents

- Masking of problems
- Loss of role model relationships (both sexes)
- Assume too many adult responsibilities

Age Effects:

Adolescents, Cont'd

- Acting out, substance abuse, early sex, esp. In girls
- Moral development
- Relationship problems: too deep, too shallow

What Can You Do?

- Refer to family therapist when access schedule conflicts with teens' schedule
- Refer to big brothers, big sisters when one parent is out of contact
- Juvenile court linkages and prevention programs
- Promote or support parenting skill classes in your community

Is It Always Awful?

1. Children of divorce have more problems, but the overall differences are small. Litigated cases are higher risk for greater problems.
2. Majority of their behaviors are within normal range.
3. BUT, some have real problems that YOU can prevent!

Things That Make It WORSE

- Parental conflict
- Putting children in the middle
- One parent's absence from child's life

Things that make it WORSE

- “Parental Alienation Syndrome”
- One or Both Parents Move, With or Without Kids
- Demands of Single Parenting

Parental Conflict

- Conflict is worse than divorce
- Conflict before divorce is unhealthy, but already done
- Amato's research: children most devastated when parents divorce without any conflict

Parental Conflict

- Conflict between parents is made worse by the adversarial system (fighting in court)
- Use pretrial conferences, mediation, divorce education, gals in extreme cases

Parental Conflict

- Most damaging: physical, loyalty conflicts, no resolution to conflict
- Children learn conflict resolution skills from parents
- Conflict dissipates substantially in first year
- Parents can learn conflict management, sensitivity to harmful effects on children

Children in the Middle

- Carrying messages
- “Putdowns” of the other parent
- Involvement in money problems
- Using child as a spy

THIS IS THE TOPIC OF ONE DIVORCE
EDUCATION VIDEO

Parental Absence

- Father absence leads to:
 - Emotional problems
 - Behavior problems, acting out (especially in boys)
 - Academic problems
 - Dating, relationship problems (especially in girls)
 - 50% reduced chance of attending college

Parental Absence, Cont'd

- Mother absence
 - Loss of development of empathy
 - Dating, relationship problems (especially in boys)
 - Increased risk of behavior problems, esp. In girls

Parental Alienation

- Gardner: up to 90% of divorced parents do this to some degree.
- Brainwashing of child about the other parent is a simplistic view. Child alienation or resistance to visitation leads to more non-adversarial resolutions.
- “Staged events” in front of child (e.G., Provoking a fight, lying about what the other said).

Parental Alienation, Cont'd

- False allegations, call for protection
- Child, afraid to resist, must side with the provocateur and is alienated from the other

Parental Alienation, Cont'd

- Child adopts an adversarial response because of modeling by adults
- Family therapist has best chance of resolving by building trust among parties

Moving Away

- Child loses one parent
- Loses friends
- Loses home neighborhood
- Loses preschool or school
- Loses sports teams, activities
- Loses relatives in home area

Stresses of Single Parenting

- Economic decline in most homes for both parents, usually worse for moms
- Increased time pressures
- Household disorganization

Stresses of Single Parenting, Cont'd

- Child has fewer gender-specific due to absent parent
- Problems due to new partners
- Decline in quality of parenting
- Stress, depression, abuse (by single parent and new partner)

What Makes It Better?

What You Can Do

- Reduce the conflict! *Refer to mediation; Parenting skill classes, family therapist.*
- Give the child lots of contact with two loving parents *presumption for shared parenting.*
- Don't move *away custody stays with remaining parent.*

What Makes It Better?

Cont'd

- Use “surrogate parents,” role models, for absent other parent
- Improved quality of parenting—*mandate parenting class*
- Teach coping skills to children -- *children's program (CODIP, CIM)*
- Stay out of court—*mandate mediation*

Break Out Session

- Ron and Debbie.
- What steps would you take now, after the filings have been made and the first pretrial conference has occurred?
- List the methods available to you to avoid trial.
- Rank the factors most important to deciding how to apportion parenting time.

Mental Health Services: Which Are Useful?

The Poor Scientific Basis for Many
Services

Typical Services

- Individual therapy: the more skill-oriented, the more likely to be successful (anger management, anxiety reduction, depression)\. Most individual therapy not effective, esp. For children, adoles. Insight approach unhelpful.
- Systems orientation necessary

Typical Services

- Couple therapy: communication skills education better than couples therapy, less risk of divorce
- Family therapy: most appropriate for divorce-related problems.

Family Interventions

- Evidence-based approaches: Functional Family Therapy; Multisystemic Therapy; Brief Strategic Family Therapy; Parenting Wisely; some parent education approaches: Incredible Years, Parents Who Care, Strengthening Families.

Model Programs, Best Practices

- The rise of evidence-based treatment
- Funding tied to use of model programs
- (See www.samhsa.gov model programs)
- Scientific requirements: evidence vs. Testimonial, anecdote, uncontrolled research

What Can You Do?

- How can a judge promote evidence-based practice in the community?

Expert Witnesses

Factors Enhancing Competence

Break Out Session

- List expert characteristics you associate with competence
- What kinds of evaluation methods have earned your respect?
- What methods do you find suspect?
- What questions can experts most competently answer for the court?

Evaluation Concepts

- Reliability: are these findings repeatable at a different time or with a different expert using the same method?
- Validity: does the method measure what it is supposed to?
- Norms on parents?

Evaluation Methods

- Observation: office, home, school
- Interview: the more detailed and behavioral, the more accurate and less subject to bias

Evaluation Methods

- Testing: personality tests—projective tests are neither reliable nor valid (Rorschach, TAT, sentence completion, drawings)
- Objective personality tests: often not normed for parents and not valid for discriminating between competent and not competent parents (MMPI, MCMI)

Procedures Used in Child Custody Evaluations

- Interviews with parents, child (92-100%)
- Testing of parents (90%)
- Office (82%) and/or home (35%) parent-child observation
- Collateral contacts (52-77%) teacher, therapist, doctor, relatives, friends
- My recs: psychologist, child-centered report, main emphasis on observation and collateral info

Questions for Expert Witnesses

- Awareness of social science research
- Theoretical orientation—avoid psychoanalytical or psychodynamic
- Knowledge of risk factors: awareness of harm from loss of contact with a parent; Multiple changes, parental conflict, quality of parenting
- Awareness of harm from observing domestic violence

Avoiding Trial: Court Actions

Parent Education, Mediation, Pretrial
Conferences, Using Experts

Divorce Education

- Growth of this field: 17% in 94, 49% in 97; Est. 60c% now
- Structure of programs: length—2-14 hours, one to seven sessions; Type—information, affect arousal, skills based
- Topics include effects of divorce on children, parenting plans, the legal system, reducing risk factors, children's stages of grief

Divorce Education

- Voluntary vs. Mandatory
- Evidence of effectiveness

Three Effective Programs

- AZ program(Wolchik, Sandler)
14 sessions, custodial parents and children.
Reduced child problems, long term effects
- OR program (Forgatch): 14 sessions, custodial mothers. Maintain parenting skills, reduced child problems
- OH program children in the middle: 1-2 sessions, skills based. Reduced relitigation, parental conflict, increased parental coop. and access

Example of Children in the Middle

- Video of most common loyalty conflicts parents inflict upon their children
- Sensitization followed by kill building focus
- High conflict program: after the storm
- More info at www.Divorce-education.Com

After the Storm



Resolving
Post-Separation
Conflict

Ineffective Programs

- Most programs are unevaluated
- Information, lecture based (children cope with divorce, GA)
- Affect based (healing hearts)
- Parent satisfaction, easily attained, is unrelated to behavior change
- Measure changes in parental conflict, relitigation, parental cooperation, child adjustment

Mediation

- Mandatory vs. voluntary: your experience?
- Effects of divorce education upon
- Structure
- Evidence: higher satisfaction than with litigation, esp. over time; fewer court appearances, greater two parent involvement, fewer support issues

Indiana Mediation

- Supreme Court of Indiana, ADR rules order Dec. 1991—mediation can be mandated
- Lake Co. ADR orders and rules (courtesy Hon. James Richards)

Pretrial Conferences

- Timing, structure
- Effective uses

Use of experts

- Family counselor or therapist known to court
- Child advocate, GAL
- Assessment related to allegations: child abuse, substance abuse, domestic violence, serious mental health problems; educational assessment

Friday Morning: Topics to Be Addressed

Participant input

Treatment/prevention of Behavior Problems, Delinquency, Substance Abuse, Child Abuse and Neglect

Common Factors to Behavior Problems, Delinquency, Substance Abuse

- Family relationship factors: lack of affection, little cohesion, parental uninvolved involvement with children
- Parenting practices: little supervision and monitoring, harsh and ineffective discipline
- Poor parent-child communication
- Poor problem solving
- Authoritarian or permissive parenting

Common Factors (cont'd)

- Poverty
- Marital/parental conflict, divorce
- Child temperament: impulsive, inattentive, low intelligence

Divorce and Parenting

- Parental supervision decreases
- Parent-child communication deteriorates
- Discipline efficacy declines
- Parental involvement often decreases
- Parental empathy diminishes
- Parental conflict increases, cooperation decreases

Child Abuse and Neglect: Aspects of Effective Programs

- Involve whole family
- Use active engagement
- Cognitive-behavioral, correct negative attributions.
- Problem solving focus
- Structured, clear goals
- Emphasize skills development
- Both in-home and group components
- Anger and stress management

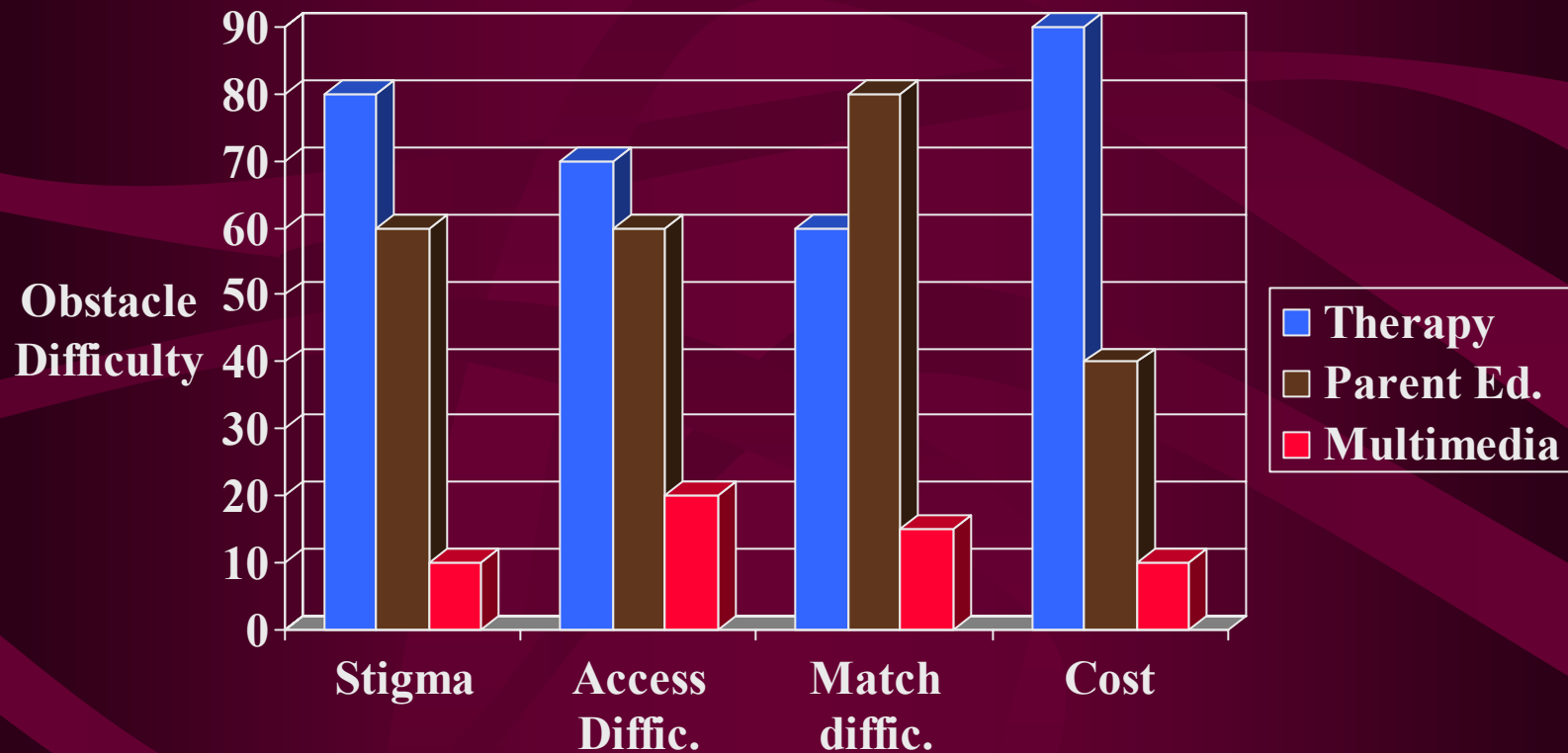
Model Programs

- **Model and exemplary programs**
 - **Functional Family Therapy (Alexander)**
 - **Multisystemic Therapy (Henggeler)**
 - **Parent Management Training (Patterson)**
 - **Treatment Foster Care (Chamberlain)**
 - **Strengthening Families Program (Kumpfer, Spoth)**
 - **Parenting Wisely(Gordon)**
 - **Preparing for the Drug Free Years (Hawkins & Catalano)**
 - **Incredible Years (Webster-Stratton)**

Comparison of methods in overcoming obstacles

- Family therapy: for highest risk, most expensive
- Parent training: shorter term, requires moderate training
- Parent education: cost-effective, scheduling barriers
- CD-ROM, web-based: easiest accessibility, lowest cost
- Self-help books: least used by at risk families

Comparison of Methods in Overcoming Obstacles



CD-ROMs and Web-Based Programs: Parenting Wisely

- Format--videos of parenting errors and successes
- Intensive interactivity
- Privacy
- Self-paced
- Nonjudgmental--feedback from computer

CD-ROM (cont'd)

- **Ease of dissemination, maintaining treatment integrity**
- **High retention of at risk families**
- **Focus on supervision, discipline, communication skills (child management & relationship enhancement)**
- **Low parental defensiveness**

Demonstration of CD-ROM

Evaluation of Parenting Wisely

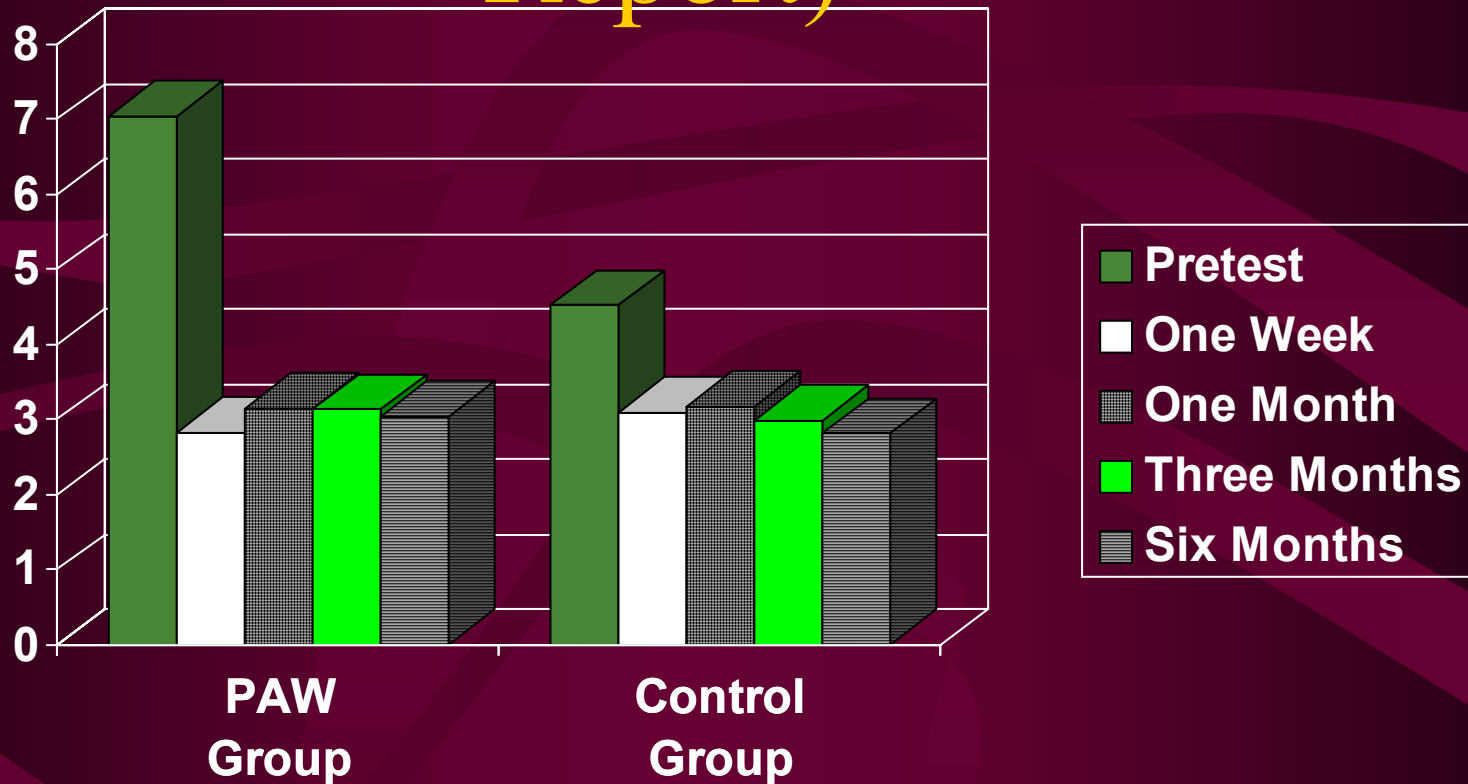
- high parent satisfaction
- improvements in knowledge
- more use of good parenting methods
- large reductions in child and teen problem behaviors (delinquency, aggression, substance use)
- effectiveness w/ court-mandated parents
- effectiveness w/ low income parents
- effects persist one year after use
- improved family functioning
- reduced parent-child conflict, aggression

Parenting Wisely

Gordon & Kacir (1997)

- Effectiveness of an Interactive Parent Training Program with Parents of Court-Referred Adolescents

Negative Behaviors--24 hr. Phone Interview (Parent Daily Report)



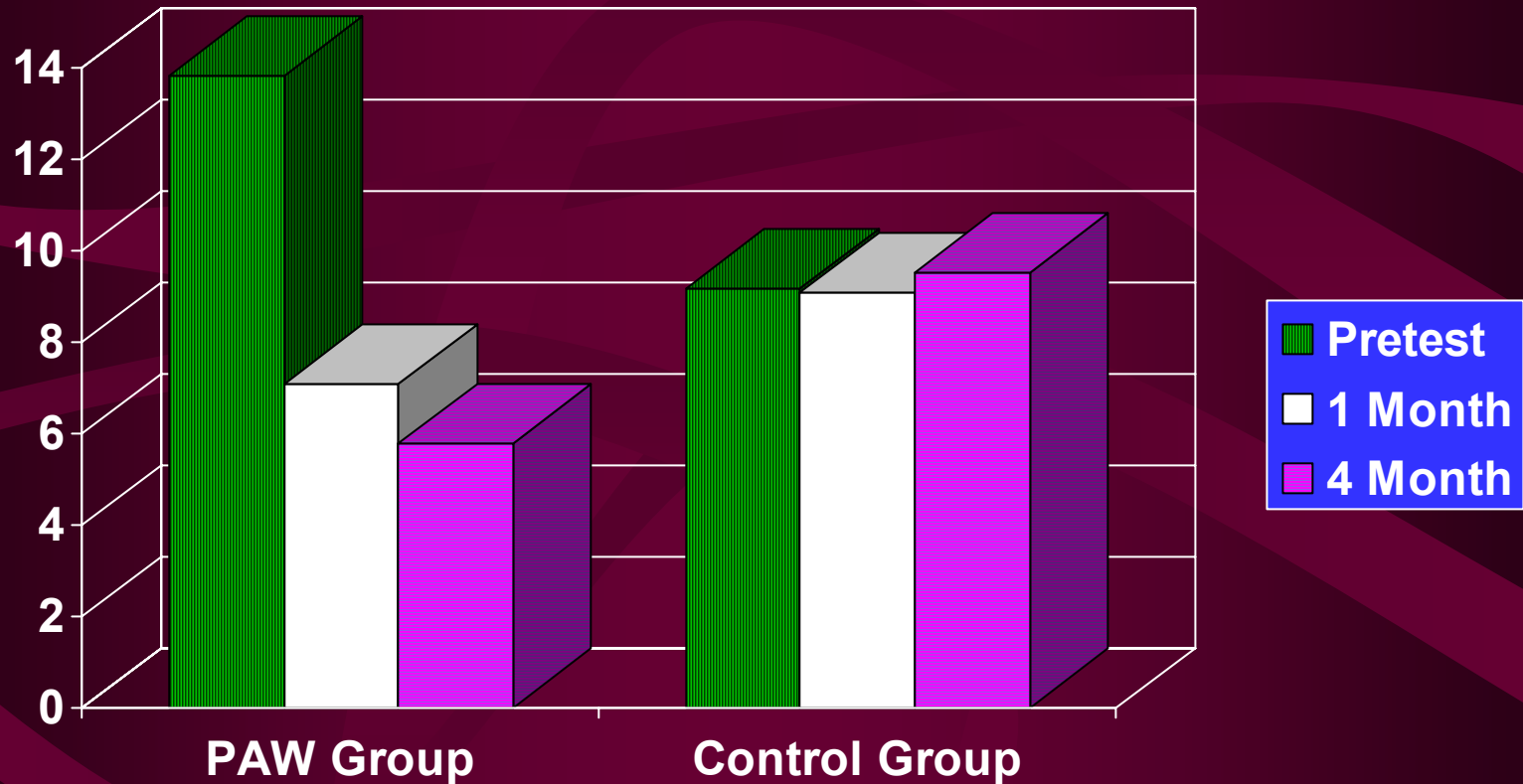
Parent Education In Rural Areas

Kacir & Gordon (1997)

- Interactive videodisk parent training for parents of difficult pre-teens

Results

Eyberg Total Problems Score



Breakout

- Identify the most important areas for prevention in your communities
- List the top three areas for intervention
- Discuss critical community partnerships to accomplish goals
- Identify funding sources

Breakout Follow Up

- Consensus on areas for prevention, funding sources?
- Partnerships for joint grant proposals from contiguous communities?

A Continuum of Services

Family Court Issues

Risk-focused Programs

- Educational programs for everyone: primary prevention
 - School-based prevention: All Stars , 11-15 yrs. www.taanglewood.net; Positive Action, 6-18 (www.positiveaction.net)
 - Community wide prevention: Life Skills Training, 10-14, (www.lifeskillstraining.com)

Risk-focused Programs

- Programs for at-risk populations (secondary prevention)
 - School based: Project Achieve (www.coedu.suf.edu/projectachieve)
 - Community wide prevention: Nurse-family Partnership Program(www.nccfc.org)
 - Family focused prevention: Preparing for the Drug Free Years (www.preventionscience.com); Parenting Wisely, 6-18 (www.parentingwisely.com); Incredible Years, 2-8, (www.incredibleyears@seanet.com)

Risk-focused Programs

- Programs for high risk populations (treatment)
 - School-based: Reconnecting Youth, 14-17, (www.son.washington.edu/deparatments/pch/ry)
 - Family focused: Functional Family Therapy (www.fftinc.com); Multisystemic Therapy (www.mstservices.com); (Parenting Wisely (www.parentingwisely.com))`

Science-Based Prevention Programs and Principles: A complete listing and descriptions of Model Programs

- DHHS Publication No. (SMA) 03-3764
- www.samhsa.gov

A continuum using CD-ROM parent training

- One time individual use
- Individual use spread out over several sessions
- Repeated use of program:
- Use of program with family (partner, child)
- Group use
- Brief consultation with therapist (Tampa FL)
- Family therapy (FFT, MST, BSFT)

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